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ABSTRACT

This study explored the beliefs, intentions, and knowledge bases of nine university supervisors and their sense of efficacy in relation to their performance as supervisors. The supervisors were attached to two teacher education programs based within two universities which differed in the structure of their teacher education programs and, to some extent, in the way student teaching was approached. Supervisors from one university had come up through the system as teachers, cooperating teachers, and then supervisors, and as a group were more experienced than the other group, which consisted of a full-time supervisor, a faculty member, and three graduate students. The study describes the supervisors' backgrounds, the teacher education program of which they were a part, their views of their place within that program, and their feedback to their student teachers. In interviews, the supervisors were questioned on their own experiences and attitudes toward teaching and student teaching, the role and activities of university supervisors, cooperating teachers, student teaching, and teacher education. A discussion is presented of various weaknesses in the supervision of student teachers, and conclusions are drawn on the positive or negative aspects of the relationships within the triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor. (JD)

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UNIVERSITY SUPERVISION OF STUDENT TEACHING

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National Institute of Education

Report No. 9061

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UNIVERSITY SUPERVISION OF STUDENT TEACHERS

Introduction

The Problem

While the field-based student teaching experience is generally cited by inservice teachers as the most important aspect of their preservice teaching experience (Lortie, 1975), very little is known about the processes and effects of this activity. Even less is known about the beliefs, roles and activities of the university supervisor. The university supervisor should play an important part in bridging the knowledge base acquired by students in other preservice teacher education courses, and the experience in applying that knowledge in practice teaching. However, there is some indication that the role of the university supervisor in supplying that link is limited. With calls for improved teacher education, and state requirements for the number of credit hours in field-based experiences increasing, the role of the university supervisor needs to be clarified, and perhaps strengthened.

The research which has been conducted on the role of the university supervisor provides some evidence that it is limited to a social and support function within the context of cooperating teacher's schools and classrooms. Friebus (1977) found that the university supervisors provide legitimation for student teachers. Zimpher et al. (1980) found that the university supervisor defines and communicates expectations for student teaching to the students and cooperating teachers; acts as a personal confident to the cooperating and student teacher; and, at times, deals with problems with school principals. Most researchers who have investigated the effects of student teaching conclude that the primary influence on the student teacher is the cooperating teacher (Zeichner, 1980; Johnson, 1979; Seperson & Joyce,

1973; Yee, 1969); although Doyle (1977) and Copeland (1980) have suggested that the ecological system of the classroom influences both the student and cooperating teacher.

Many have concluded that the powerful influence of the cooperating teacher on the field-based experience is, in fact, negative. Lacey (1977), for example, views the student teacher as being coerced into the conservative norms of the school bureaucracy. The realization that the cooperating teachers' effects are as powerful as they are have led others to call for major changes in the field-based experiences, and some have even suggested that the university supervisor aspect of the experience be abandoned (Bowman, 1979).

An understanding of whether and how to change the role of the university supervisor and increase its effectiveness requires an understanding of the supervisors: how they think about their role, the student teacher experience, effective teaching, effective student teaching, their effectiveness, and their place within the institution to which they belong. We should also determine how these beliefs and attitudes drive the nature of their interactions with student teachers. For example, if it is anticipated that one role of the university supervisor is to act as a broker between the academic and field-based experiences of student teachers, the supervisors should believe that research and formal educational knowledge are useful to them in explaining classroom events and providing solutions to problems. But if the university supervisors believe that their own teaching experiences are much more powerful in guiding their behaviors as supervisors than a formal education knowledge base, they will not act as an effective bridge between the university courses and the classroom experiences of the student teachers.

The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs, intentions, and knowledge bases of nine university supervisors; and their sense of efficacy in relation to their performance as supervisors. The study also describes the university supervisors' backgrounds, the teacher education program of which they were a part, their views of their place within that program, and their feedback to the student teachers. Of particular interest is the relationship between the institutional structure of the teacher education program, and the beliefs and attitudes of the university supervisors.

The Data and Methods

The data were collected as part of the Clinical Preservice Teacher Education study at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education (Griffin et al., 1983), funded by the National Institute of Education. In the larger study, 93 student teachers, 88 cooperating teacher and 17 university supervisors from two universities responded to a battery of instruments related to personal and professional attributes. Interactions between dyads and triads were taped, observations of classroom teaching were made, and diaries were maintained by the participants. This study will use the data from a subsample (nine university supervisors) which was studied more intensively than the large sample. The data used for this study include a set of three structured interviews of each university supervisor, demographic information on the supervisors, their notes on their interactions with the student teachers, and verbatim records of their participation in three-way conferences with their student and cooperating teachers.

The three interviews consists of approximately 30 questions each, and explored the university supervisors' beliefs about their own teaching experiences, the student teaching experience, their own activities as

supervisors, effective supervision, effective cooperating teacher behaviors, and their sense of their own success. The interviews were given after several weeks of the beginning, towards the middle, and at the conclusion of a student teaching cycle. They were also asked to describe their weakest and strongest student teachers, and to keep notes on their interactions with some of their student teachers.

The interviews were content analyzed, with particular attention paid to the supervisors' conceptions of the supervisory role and the knowledge bases required for that role. Attention was also paid to differences in responses depending upon years of experience in supervision, and the structure of the supervisors' position within the institution. The notes on interactions between supervisors and student teachers were analyzed in relation to the types of feedback the student teachers received; and in several cases, it was possible to compare these notes with the statements made by the supervisors about their weakest and strongest student teachers. Since only nine supervisors in two institutions were interviewed, the investigation of relationships can only be considered investigatory and hypothesis-generating.

The Teacher Education Programs

The two teacher education programs were based within two universities, named, for purposes of this report, Metropolitan University (MU) and State University (SU). MU is a private institution located in a large urban area. Its College of Education employs 58 full-time faculty, nine joint appointments, and 110 adjunct faculty and lecturers. SU is a very large state university with almost twice as many students as MU. It employs 152 full-time equivalent faculty members in its College of Education.

The major differences between the universities in terms of the student teaching experience consist of the following: the MU program takes place in urban schools, with heterogeneous student populations, and the SU program placed the student teachers in this study in schools with more homogeneous, middle- and upper-class student populations; the field experiences for the MU students consist of at least two semesters, for the SU students, one semester with some pre-student teaching classroom experiences; the salaries of the university supervisors at MU are paid jointly by the school district and the university, through the school district; and at SU, they are paid by the university. Both programs require extensive evaluations at the end of the experience, on similarly standard forms. Forms are also designed for each observation, although SU's are blank and designed for descriptions of behaviors, and MU's are more structured. The supervisors at SU are supplied with a pacing guide which sets predetermined levels of competence at certain points within the semester. (More information on the nature of the program can be found in Griffin et al., 1983.)

The Sample of University Supervisors

Of the nine supervisors, three were male and six female. The average age of the MU and SU supervisors was 52.5 and 38.5 years, respectively. The length of teaching experience for the MU supervisors ranged from 8 to 11 years to over 15; for the SU supervisors, from 1 to 4 to 7 years.

The MU teachers had come up through the system, as teachers, cooperating teachers, and then supervisors, with some in other school roles as well. As a group, they were more experienced as teachers and supervisors than the SU group. Three had made the choice to become supervisors as a "next step" in their careers, and one was somewhat unwilling, but decided to give it a try. They had all known supervisors before becoming one

themselves, were impressed by them; and their decisions to become supervisors were influenced by knowing them. They considered themselves professional educators, with one foot in the university and one in the school district, but leaning heavily toward the school district. All of them had previously supervised in most of the cooperating schools in which their students were practice teaching: in fact, they had developed "special relationships" with those schools.

One of the SU supervisors was a full-time, long-term supervisor with a number of years of experience in teaching. One was a university faculty member, working part-time as a supervisor. Three were graduate students, who worked as supervisors on a part-time basis. Two knew supervisors before becoming one but were not influenced by them: three never knew one. The three graduate students became supervisors for financial reasons, the full-time supervisor because someone had twisted her arm after a long hiatus at home with her children, and the faculty member was compelled to because one class did not fill up. One graduate student had never been a supervisor before, the other two had for one or two semesters. Four of the SU supervisors were in schools new to them, working with cooperating teachers new to them.

The Findings

The interviews questioned teachers on their own experiences and attitudes toward teaching and student teaching, the role and activities of university supervision, cooperating teachers, and student teaching and teacher education. The diaries provided information on their views of several student teachers and contacts with them, and the conference verbatim reports presented information on their discussions with their student teachers.

Teaching and Instruction

All of the supervisors had been elementary and/or secondary school teachers, the SU supervisors with many fewer average years of experience than the MU supervisors. Three of the MU supervisors, and one of the SU supervisors still considered themselves as teachers. When questioned about what they liked the most about teaching, five stated that they liked the children, two mentioned student growth and learning, two mentioned subject matter instruction and three enjoyed the freedom. These themes followed through the individual responses to many of the questions related to teaching, supervision, and student teaching. Three felt they did their best in relating to children and their parents, two in imparting subject matter, one in instructional skills, and one in being free to be him/herself in front of the children. Two stated that the long range goals of teaching related to knowledge of subject matter, the others considered broader goals such as life-time skills, responsibility as citizens, happiness and making it in the system.

Two areas that caused some difficulty to them as teachers were evaluation and classroom management. Perhaps the strongest and most consistent response to a question concerned their dislike of--even agony over--grading students. All found it extremely difficult. Most stated that they graded on the basis of growth and/or effort rather than on an absolute level, and most also attempted to use grading for purposes of encouragement. Many also stated that they had had problems in classroom management and control, particularly at the beginning of their teaching experience. Three of the SU supervisors indicated dissatisfaction with the classroom management element of their teaching experience, and one MU supervisor mentioned problems at first.

One of the more complex concepts in the supervisors' theories of instruction was planning. Planning clearly meant different things at different times to the same supervisor; and depending upon the definition, could be more or less important. Planning could mean preparation of standard lesson plans, with behavioral objectives and detailed accounts of classroom activities. It could also mean subject matter preparation, and preparation to handle unanticipated classroom events. Planning could be assessed by looking at lesson plans, or by looking at how the plans were implemented. This ambivalence toward planning carried through into the assessment of student teaching. On the one hand, the major criticism of student teachers' activities was lack of planning. On the other, several supervisors' descriptions of the weakest student teachers discounted the importance of planning, by admitting that they could plan, but not teach.

The Role of the University Supervisor

1. Responsibilities and functions. When asked about the responsibilities of a supervisor, most referred to supporting student teachers (providing a "security blanket"); three to facilitating growth; and two to mediating between the university and the school system. One also stressed the responsibility for public relations for the university.

All supervisors felt they had a clear perception of their role, and stated that they were teacher educators. The supervisors were asked a number of times, in different ways, their perceptions of their role. Four functions emerged:

Liaison between the university and the school: This function was mentioned the most often, and clearly was most important in the minds of the supervisors. This was particularly the case with the MU supervisors. All stated, for example, that the advice they would give new supervisors related

to getting to know the cooperating school and its personnel, maintaining open communications with school personnel, etc. The goal was to provide for a smooth, conflict-free process of installing and maintaining student teachers in a school: maintaining contact--socially and professionally--with school people; selecting the right cooperating teacher for each student teacher; smoothing over problems between school people and student teachers. In fact, several implied that a failure in communications and/or relationships between a student teacher and a cooperating teacher reflected negatively on themselves and the university.

Providing student teachers with expectations concerning their behavior and skills to be learned in the student teaching experience: The rule which supervisors stated was most strongly stressed to the student teachers was that they should get along with the cooperating teacher. This function also included the supervisors informing the cooperating teachers of expectations concerning their role, with particular attention paid to the process of introducing the student teachers to the students.

Clinical support: The university supervisors reported that they worked with individual student teachers on both the personal and student teaching aspects of their lives. The MU supervisors, particularly, stressed an involvement in helping student teachers sort out their personal lives. None of them saw themselves contributing much to the student teachers' classroom experiences, except in the weekly seminars. They were "facilitators" and created the experiences for the student teachers. The cooperating teachers, they felt, had the all-important role in the classroom teaching experience. Those supervisors who took the classroom clinician role more seriously than others expressed the least satisfaction with their performance at the end of the student teaching cycle.

Teaching: The supervisors were most ambivalent about this function. While they all stated that they considered themselves to be teacher educators, only the MU and one SU supervisors felt that they "taught" the student teachers anything. The MU supervisors primarily mentioned teaching personal qualities: sense of humor, good attitudes, that working with children is exciting. The others doubted that they had taught the student teachers very much. They facilitated learning. Nonetheless, all indicated throughout the interviews that their seminars were important; if they would change anything about their future performance, they would concentrate on changing their seminars.

2. Role development. Most supervisors felt that the role is well developed and shouldn't change; but that aspects outside the role should. One suggested that s/he does not like the stigma of being the "person with the black book," and feels isolated in the schools; another stated that the clinical aspect should be more intense--that there should be more monitoring of student teachers in the classroom.

3. Value of the role. The supervisors stated that they valued their role most in terms of seeing student teachers develop, working with people--particularly school people and kids, and one added that s/he liked doing the demonstrations in the classroom. What they valued least was their extremely busy schedules, and lack of time to be more effective. Several SU supervisors mentioned that they had no feeling of impact.

4. Problems in the role. The supervisors all agreed that a major problem in their role would be a breakdown of communications between any combination of themselves, cooperating teachers, student teachers, and school administrators. Such a breakdown would reflect negatively on

themselves, as supervisors. All supervisors, therefore, were available at any time, at home or work, for a telephone call, or consultation.

5. Knowledge and skill base for the role. The supervisors were asked how they learned their role, and what courses or experiences would be useful to them. While some materials were distributed to the supervisors by their universities to guide them in their role, none of the supervisors felt that these were particularly helpful. They reported that the knowledge base on which they relied most heavily was their past experience as teachers; and seven also reported that they also relied on informal contracts with their colleagues. None had ever observed another supervisor. The formal courses that they had taken, they felt, were not helpful. However, several did suggest that courses in human relations would be useful, and one suggested that they should be kept up-to-date on recent research findings such as those on questioning skills.

6. Qualities of an effective supervisor. Most of the responses to this question referred to personal qualities: flexibility, cooperativeness, organization, willingness to work long hours, sense of humor, being positive. Many also mentioned the need to know the schools and school personnel. Two supervisors mentioned that the effective supervisor required knowledge of subject matter; although one stated that ability to work with school personnel was more important than knowledge of subject matter.

7. Status of the role within the university and school district. A major difference emerged between the MU and the SU supervisors in terms of their perceived status within their respective institutions. The MU supervisors viewed themselves as professionals both within the university and school district communities; however, their reference group was clearly school district personnel. Within the school district they held a

relatively high status position. Supervisory teaching was seen as a career step within the school district community. An example of the way their status operationally manifested itself was the way in which feedback on student teaching was communicated to the student teachers. Several MU supervisors mentioned in their diaries that they conveyed problems that they saw in their student teachers' classroom techniques to their cooperating teachers, who were then expected to convey these problems to the student teachers. Further, one activity of the MU supervisors was to oversee the cooperating teacher's evaluation of the student teacher. The SU supervisors, on the other hand, saw themselves as a part of the university community. As such, they were in a low status position, and complained that people at the university did not value the student teaching experience as much as they should. Except for the long-term, experienced supervisor, they felt isolated in the schools. In two cases, the cooperating teachers conveyed problems to the supervisors who were then expected to discuss these with the student teachers.

Activities of a University Supervisor

The university supervisors reported that they worked very hard. The hours were long, their responsibilities complex, and they also had to travel from school to school to university. Most of the MU supervisors had other responsibilities besides supervision either within the university (some taught methods courses) or within the school district (recruitment of new teachers). Four of the five SU supervisors also had other responsibilities, and were only part-time supervisors. Three were graduate students; one was a full-time faculty member in the university. All tried to make themselves available at any time for emergency consultations. The process of scheduling times to observe and meet with the student and cooperating

teachers was extremely difficult and complex; particularly at SU where the relationships with the schools--and therefore the school operations--were not well developed. The diaries of the SU supervisors were full of comments about unexpected scheduling changes which threw them off their observation and consultation schedules.

1. Placement of student teacher. The MU supervisors expended considerable time and energy on this activity. Since they viewed the student teaching experience of working in a teacher's classroom as essential to learning how to teach, and each experience idiosyncratic, they selected the cooperating teachers very carefully. In that the student teachers at MU are required to take at least two semesters of practice teaching, the second experience was selected even more carefully than the first, to provide a more compatible style, or to fill in gaps in the students teacher's experience. The MU supervisors had also, on occasion, switched cooperating teachers for a student teacher in the middle of a semester, if problems arose. The SU supervisors also considered the cooperating teacher to be extremely important, but were not as free to place the student teachers. They had not worked out special relationships with the schools, and did not know the teachers very well. They were also more frustrated by the fact that their student teachers were only required to have one semester of student teaching, although there was a requirement for observation earlier in the student teacher's course requirements.

2. Orientation of students to the school situation. The supervisors place considerable emphasis on this activity. Their seminars stressed the importance of school rules and obeying them (e.g., no chewing of gum), of appropriate dress and demeanor, and of getting along in the social setting of the school. These sessions continued throughout the semester, as

supervisors invited librarians, school counselors, etc. to their seminars to explain their functions to the student teachers.

3. Evaluation of student teachers. None of the supervisors expressed a dislike of evaluating students; a surprising finding given their dislike of grading students when they had been teachers. They all stated, however, that they evaluated students on the basis of growth and motivation rather than on an absolute basis. This philosophy of evaluation contrasted sharply with the forms which were supplied for the evaluation, particularly at SU. SU also supplies the supervisors with a pacing guide which spells out, in absolute terms, the skills and skill levels that should be acquired by the student teachers at different points during the student teaching experience. Most SU supervisors stated that they "fudge" or "squiggle" with the evaluation forms.

4. Observation of student teachers. Seven supervisors stated that they observed each student teacher once per week, and two stated that they observed every two to three weeks. However, some of those observations were quite informal ("just pop in to let them see that I am in the school"). When they observed, six reported looking at how well the student teacher relates to the students, one looked at communication of subject matter, and one observed specific behaviors such as questioning skills, etc.

5. Feedback. The SU supervisors used blank forms which they sometimes provided to their student teachers, and sometimes just wrote them informal notes. The MU supervisors had forms with categories which they filled in and gave to their student teachers who then wrote on the forms areas in which they would improve. Much of the communication with student teachers, however, was informal. The MU supervisors, for example, reported spending

considerable time with their student teachers on personal problems and job counseling.

The supervisors' diaries on observation of and communications with student teachers, as well as the verbatim three-way counseling sessions indicated major differences between the MU and SU supervisors' feedback. The MU supervisors were highly supportive and very positive in their comments. They were not directly critical, but asked questions of the student teachers, and provided helpful hints, more of a problem-solution than criticism orientation. The helpful hints could relate to how a left-handed child should place the page on the desk, how to work with a particularly disruptive child, etc. In one case, there was great discrepancy between an MU supervisor's comments in the interview on the strongest and weakest student teacher, and the comments which the supervisor actually provided the student teachers. While the supervisor was particularly worried about this student teacher, the concerns did not come through in their interactions. The comments and notes were highly supportive, with lots of positive feedback and little criticism or prescriptions. In several cases the supervising teachers asked the cooperating teachers to provide their student teachers with some prescriptive feedback on specific control problems. The SU supervisors, on the other hand, were more critical, dealt with more formal behavioral constructs, and were more prescriptive than the MU supervisors. One, for example, did a Flander's interaction analysis on all his/her student teachers. Others provided time on task and student attention information on their student teachers' classroom. Interestingly, a number of SU student teachers felt that their supervisors' feedback was not particularly helpful, while only one MU student teacher found the supervisor's feedback helpful.

As described in Griffin et al. (1983, pp. 150-151), some SU student teachers felt that their supervisors were unfamiliar with the school, and others that the style of observation, feedback and/or conferencing was unhelpful.

6. Problem-solving. The problems which concerned the supervisors the most were related to breakdowns in communication between cooperating and student teachers. Such a situation would be particularly problematic to several supervisors who stated that they evaluate their own performance in terms of whether or not there is conflict between their student and cooperating teachers. This problem sometimes necessitated switching the student teacher to another cooperating teacher. The MU supervisors relied heavily on their colleagues to provide advice on problems, and both SU and MU supervisors stated that they talk immediately to the cooperating teacher and sometimes to the principal when there are problems.

7. Conducting seminars. Most of the supervisors conducted seminars once a week for their student teachers. They invited school personnel to give demonstrations or talk about their roles, they sometimes invited university faculty members to lecture on a specific topic of interest, they talked about expectations and instruction, and they encouraged the student teachers to talk about their experiences. While not stated explicitly, some recent research knowledge was introduced into these seminars. For example, one supervisor stated that s/he had introduced the student teacher group to some information on sex differences in mathematics achievement which she had learned about at a recent conference. Many of the supervisors saw the seminars as an opportunity to develop group cohesion among the student teachers. Further, the seminars were extremely important to the supervisors in terms of their ability to influence the student teachers. Asked what

they would change next semester, most of the supervisors focused on changing the length and/or content of the seminars.

8. Job satisfaction. The supervisors were asked in a number of different ways about their satisfaction with their role, their job, and their performance. The MU supervisors expressed great satisfaction with their jobs. They often said that they loved their job, and that it was the best one around. All stated that they would remain as supervisors until they retired, or until the school district ran out of money. One reported turning down a higher paying job in the school district because of satisfaction in the supervising position. They felt that their roles were important, and felt successful at the end of the semester. The SU supervisors all indicated less than complete satisfaction with what they were doing. Even the most experienced questioned his/her success at the end of the semester, and some felt that their work was "all for naught." Most indicated that they hadn't really wanted to supervise, but were doing so for financial reasons. Only one stated that s/he wanted to remain as a supervisor. One also would not fail a student teacher who "under no conditions should go into teaching" because the student teacher would get a job anyway. The differences in the sense of efficacy as expressed in terms of job satisfaction, feelings of success/failure, and degree of perceived influence between the MU and SU supervisors were extreme.

Student Teaching and the Teacher Education Program

Seven supervisors had found their own student teaching experience to be superb; one found it to be hard work, and one a farce. The supervisor who found his/her experience to be a farce felt that the present university program was as well. Most also felt that the student teaching experience was extremely important within their own university's teacher education

program. In fact, there appeared to be little connection in their minds between the rest of the teacher education coursework, and the student teaching experience. Most were vague about the goals of their teacher education programs: one stated that s/he didn't know the goals ("Are there any?"). Only one other course was mentioned by supervisors; and they expected very little in terms of pedagogical and subject matter knowledge and skills that the students should bring with them to student teaching.

When asked what qualities the student teachers should come with, they responded primarily in terms of personal qualities: flexibility, willingness to spend time, commitment, etc. Two mentioned subject matter competence, and three SU supervisors mentioned instructional skills such as planning and small group management. Four supervisors felt they should leave with instructional skills, two mentioned classroom management skills, and three referred to good attitudes. A number mentioned that they should be able to walk into any type of classroom and teach, and one felt that this couldn't happen for several years. The MU supervisors were not as demanding as the SU supervisors, probably because the MU student teachers were going to have a second semester of student teaching. Most supervisors attributed a student teacher's failure of the course to lack of motivation: "they just didn't want to become teachers."

They were all relatively negative about how well prepared their student teachers were in a number of different areas. They were best prepared, the supervisors felt, in interpersonal skills. Seven felt that classroom management skills were lacking, some felt that they were lacking in diagnosing, evaluating and grading, as well as planning.

Most supervisors saw the individual student teaching experience as idiosyncratic, and were worried about generalizability of the learned

behaviors. Even the MU supervisors, who could place student teachers in two very different situations with different teachers, were concerned that the styles, skills, behavior, attitudes gained by a student teacher in the two different settings would not be enough to help them in different contexts.

The Cooperating Teacher

All supervisors saw the cooperating teacher as the most important element in the student teaching experience. They all remembered their own, and, in general, had good things to say about him/her. They remembered them as flexible, supportive, and providing freedom to the student teachers to try their own style. A few complained that their cooperating teachers had not provided them with enough guidance.

The supervisors described effective cooperating teachers as good teachers, but they have to be more than that. They have to be willing to "share" their students, and maybe even to compromise some of their effectiveness to help the student teacher. They have to keep lines of communication open, to be caring and positive. The supervisors felt that problems occur when cooperating teachers do not take enough initiative and don't provide enough feedback; or when their philosophy differs radically from their own, and/or their student teachers'. Three SU supervisors had problems with one or more of their existing group of cooperating teachers, the MU teachers had no problems.

Summary

All of the supervisors except one saw student teaching as an extremely important activity. The most important functions in the supervisory role were those of liaison activities between the university and the school system, and provision of moral support to the student teachers. They all felt that the cooperating teacher was more important in the classroom

student teaching experience than the supervisor. All had been teachers and relied heavily on their teaching experiences as the knowledge base for their supervisory roles. There was little connection in the supervisors' minds or actions to the rest of the teacher education program except when they sometimes invited other faculty members to lecture in their seminars. Research was mentioned only three times in all of the interviews, although several did mention introducing their student teachers to up-to-date information such as that on questioning skills and sex differences in achievement.

There were major differences between the responses of the MU supervisors and the SU supervisors. The MU supervisors saw themselves as professional school people, with links to the university. Their clinical role with the student teachers was supportive rather than critical, helpful rather than prescriptive, and their language and constructs were student problem-oriented rather than analytic or theoretical. They spent considerable time on their student teachers' personal problems, and developed and carefully maintained special relationships with their cooperating schools. They did this by being friendly, cooperative, and helpful to all types of school personnel. They relied extensively on collegial support to help them through problems. And they were extremely satisfied with their jobs, felt successful and efficacious.

The SU supervisors, on the other hand, viewed themselves as university faculty members, and as such, being in lower status positions than tenured faculty. They were frustrated in their clinical role: they needed more time to do an effective job. They were more critical and prescriptive than the MU supervisors, and used more analytic constructs in their feedback. Because of few years of experience either as teachers or supervisors and

little knowledge of their cooperating schools, most of the SU supervisors were somewhat unsure of themselves. Only one had special relationships in the schools; and while they knew they had to work at developing cooperative relationships with the school people, they felt isolated. They did not rely on each other as colleagues. The SU supervisors were not satisfied with their jobs, felt ineffective, and had a low sense of efficacy.

Conclusions and Implications

If the major role of the university supervisor is to bridge the academic and pedagogical knowledge acquired by student teachers in their coursework and the field-based experiences, evidence in this study leads to the conclusion that this is not happening. Further, it is clear from the attitudes and understandings of these supervisors that it couldn't happen, given the present structure of the program. The supervisors observed that each student teaching experience is unique, and that student teachers will have difficulty generalizing from the experience. They felt that the student teachers do not bring much with them from their previous coursework; and, in any event, personal qualities such as flexibility, caring and hard work appear to be more important for the beginning student teacher than knowledge and skills. They felt they do not have as much time to observe and communicate with the student teachers as they should, and therefore devalued their clinical observation/feedback function. Their solutions for a problem student teacher was to propose either another semester of student teaching with a different cooperating teacher or switching cooperating teachers in mid semester. They also focused on changing the content or structure of their weekly seminars when asked what they would do differently next semester. Still, there was little indication that the supervisors felt

that they taught the student teachers anything during the seminars: but they did, at least, have some control over them.

What, then, can the university supervisor do? Clearly, the MU supervisors have refined their understanding of the role of the university supervisor. By focusing on coordination and communication with the cooperating school personnel, and providing support for the student teachers, their perceived functions were more realistic in terms of potential accomplishment. Further, viewed as school personnel, they found themselves in a relatively high status position. They were, therefore, extremely satisfied with their work, and the student teachers appeared to appreciate the feedback they received. The SU supervisors, on the other hand, seemed to take the clinical observation/feedback function more seriously. They found it impossible to satisfactorily accomplish this function, particularly since the student teachers are only in the schools for one semester. Further, the student teachers did not appear to appreciate the feedback the SU supervisors provided, and supervision was seen as a low status position in their university departments. No wonder they exhibited a low sense of efficacy.

The very different institutional arrangements at MU and SU could explain some of the differences in approach between the two groups of supervisors. The MU supervisors were more school district oriented, and were paid by the school district. The SU supervisors, except for one, had not planned to become supervisors and were not going to be for long. Their allegiance was with the university, which paid them their salaries. Nonetheless, there were other factors which could explain the differences, notably that students at MU required two semesters of student teaching, and SU only required one. Further, the MU supervisors had clearly formed a

tight and supportive collegial group which would help them through many problems. Such a group was not in evidence in the interviews with the SU supervisors. And lastly, the MU group was much more experienced as teachers and supervisors than the SU supervisors. The one SU supervisor who was experienced, however, exhibited many of the same frustrations as the other SU supervisors.

Whether or not the institutional characteristics account for the differences between groups, serious questions concerning the role of the university supervisor in the student teaching experience remain. Is it possible to bridge the academic coursework and the field experiences during student teaching? Who should do it? Is highly supportive feedback which builds student teachers confidence more important at that stage than explicit behavioral and critical feedback? Is it possible to build a student teaching experience that is less idiosyncratic than the supervisors think it is? Can different pre-student teaching coursework better prepare students for their teaching experience? Or should we pay more attention to the induction stage as the place to help teachers begin to relate their teaching experiences with the constructs, theories and knowledge learned in their coursework; and thereby begin to be able to generalize to different contexts?

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